

DANBURY PARISH COUNCIL
A Quality Council



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 22 April 2009
at 8.00pm at the Sports & Social Centre, Danbury

Present: Parish Cllrs: S Berlyn (Chairman), M Wood (Vice Chairman), A Allen, D Bolwell, H Clacy, S Freeman, F Hawkins, A Keeler, J Langley, A Pemberton, D Powell, M Telling, J Thomson and D Whiteing;
Cllr Ferguson, Little Baddow Parish Council; Cllr Christine Weir and Cllr Richard Weir, South Woodham Ferrers Town Council; and approximately 75 members of the public, including representatives of local clubs and organisations.

In attendance: Mrs M Saunders (Parish Clerk), Mrs A Abbott (Assistant Clerk), Mrs E Blyth (Assistant Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Parish Cllr Mrs J Wells, Borough Councillors C Kingsley, R Shepherd and I Wright, County Cllr P Martin, Mrs J Bradbury, RSPB, Mrs P Jones, Theatrical Pursuits.

1 Introduction

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and introduced this year's guest speakers from the Essex Association of Local Councils. They were Joy Sheppard, Chief Executive, and Alison East, County Training Officer.

2 Guest Speakers – Quality Parish Council presentation

Mrs Sheppard began by expressing her pleasure at being present this evening to present Danbury Parish Council with its renewed Quality Council award. Having first achieved Quality status in 2005, Danbury was one of 13 out of the 47 parish councils in Essex to have gained re-accreditation by meeting new criteria. She congratulated the Council and the Clerk for this achievement and for setting an example to other councils.

The Quality Status award was nationally accredited by a Panel appointed directly by the Government. One of the new requirements was the preparation of a Training Intent Document, and the Document prepared by the Clerk at Danbury had won an EALC award in 2008. The Parish Council also had to provide evidence of promoting local democracy and citizenship, and of engagement with the community.

Mrs Sheppard listed some of the aspects of the Council's work which had caught the Panel's attention when judging the application for re-accreditation. These included the Council's newsletter, Danbury Times, as an accessible source of reference and information about what was happening in the village, including its coverage of voluntary groups. The Parish Plan and Action Plan were mentioned, along with the Danbury leaflet and Parish Footpaths Map, also the fact that the Parish Council had an office which was open to the public and an internet presence linked to other local councils. Other points mentioned included the village Clubs & Organisations leaflet, the annual litter-pick, the children's summer sports programme, Danbury First Responders, the Council's small grants scheme, and the Danbury Planning Framework which was in preparation. In addition, in 2008 Danbury had won the Best Kept Village Class 1 award and Class 1 in the Best Kept Playing Fields

Competition. The Panel noted that councillors in Danbury had gone into local schools to talk about the work of the Parish Council.

Mrs Sheppard said that the Parish Council's re-accreditation meant that it was well placed to take on the new Power of Well-Being. This would give the Council additional powers to undertake work which would promote the social, economic or environmental well-being of the village. At this point Mrs Sheppard handed over to her colleague, Alison East, who explained that additional training for the Power of Well-Being would be required for both the Clerk and Councillors. After that the Council would need to pass a resolution, as an eligible Council, that it wished to take on the additional powers.

In conclusion, Mrs Sheppard congratulated the Parish Council again for achieving Quality Status re-accreditation and formally handed the framed Certificate to the Chairman. Cllr Berlyn accepted the Certificate and thanked Mrs Sheppard and Mrs East for attending and speaking to the meeting.

3 Minutes of the 2008 Annual Parish Meeting

Copies of the minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2008 were circulated at the meeting. Cllr Telling proposed that the minutes be approved, and this was seconded by Cllr Wood and agreed unanimously. Two matters arising from the minutes were raised and were answered by the Chairman: nothing more had been heard about the possible purchase of land at Colemans Lane as a Travellers' site; and the Council had established that no authority had the power to take over and renovate the Old Tea Rooms at Runsell Green.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 21st April 2008 be approved and signed as a correct record.

4 Chairman's Report

Cllr Berlyn began by welcoming two new Council members appointed since the last Annual Meeting – Cllrs Steve Freeman and Arthur Pemberton. There was now a full complement of 15 Parish Councillors. Cllr Berlyn then gave his review of the Council's work over the past year, including the following items:

- In 2008 Danbury had won the Best Kept Village Award , Class 1, for the second year running, and the Best Kept Playing Field Award for the third year running. The Clerk, as Mrs Sheppard mentioned, had won first place in EALC's competition with her Training Intent Document. The Parish Council was 'Highly Commended' in another EALC competition for its policy on Communications and Community Engagement;
- As the meeting had heard, the Council had been successfully re-accredited as a Quality Parish Council with more stringent requirements;
- A new picnic table had been installed in the children's play area and replacement fencing at the front of the Sports & Social Centre (both provided from prize money won over the year);
- Considerable renovations had been carried out at the Sports & Social Centre;

- A permanent electricity bollard had been installed at Eves Corner to power the Christmas tree lights and sound equipment, and had been used at both Christmas and Easter;
- The war memorial at Elm Green had been cleaned and the names re-cut, and the Memorial had been re-dedicated at a service on Remembrance Sunday 2008;
- In association with the Neighbourhood Action Panel and local young people, a Youth Shelter had been installed on Dawson Memorial Field adjacent to the basket-ball court, financed by the Youth Initiative Fund and Essex Police;
- New bollards had been erected opposite the Chemist at Eves Corner to control parking so that pedestrians were not impeded;
- ECC Highways had at last repaired Footpath 18 (The Heights to Beaumont Park) following constant pressure from the Parish Council, and the bus shelter at Runsell Green had been repaired following vandalism with a grant of £900 from ECC;
- Public meetings had been held to discuss two contentious issues – the planning application for a new medical centre in the village and ECC’s proposal for a quarry at Tyndales Farm;
- Phase 2 of the Drainage and Car Parks Project had been successfully completed, and the Council had recently heard that it was to receive a grant of £33,000 towards Phase 3 from the ECC ‘Making the Links – Making it Happen’ fund.

Turning to on-going projects, the Chairman referred to the recent consultation on the Danbury Planning Framework which the Council hoped to have accepted by CBC as a Supplementary Planning Document. He gave details of the annual ‘Litter-Pick’ on the following Saturday, 25th April. Phase 3 of the Drainage and Car Parks project would involve the resurfacing of both car parks, installation of low level lighting and an improved access path to the Parish Office, Tennis Club and Bowling Club. The Council would also continue to monitor developments relating to the proposed medical centre and to the quarry proposal.

Cllr Berlyn concluded his report by thanking all Councillors and staff and for their support over the past twelve months. He expressed the Council’s appreciation for the individuals who regularly cleared litter from their areas of the village, for those who assisted with the delivery of Danbury Times, and to all the clubs and organisations represented at the meeting.

5 Report by the Chairman of the Resources Committee

Cllr Whiteing presented the accounts for the financial year to 31st March 2008, the most recent set of audited accounts available. Work was still being completed on the accounts for the year to 31st March 2009. No objections were made to the accounts for 2007/08.

Cllr Whiteing reported that the increase in the Parish Council’s Precept for 2008/09, at 4.82%, had again been kept under 5%. The Council tried to keep to this, but it did mean that larger projects such as the Drainage and Car Parks scheme took longer to complete, with money being set aside each year. The Public Loan for the Sports & Social Centre had now been paid off, but a loan was still outstanding on the Groundsman’s office and tractor shed. The Council now had to budget for an extra

£3000 in duty costs for diesel to run its tractor, and this alone accounted for 2% of the Precept increase.

As had been reported in 'Borough Life', the Borough Council had withdrawn one of the two subsidies Parish Councils had received with the result that residents appeared to have received a larger increase in Precept than the 4.82% mentioned above. The Parish Council was disappointed that this had not been explained by CBC on individual tax demands. Cllr Whiteing reported that CBC was also reviewing its second subsidy to Parish Councils.

6 Public question time

The Chairman thanked Cllr Whiteing for his report. He then invited the public to ask questions or make comments on any village matters. A number of items were raised and answers made, as follows:

- *Car parking at Dawson Memorial Field should be 'pay and display' as a lot of users came from outside the village.*

This matter was being reviewed by the Council as part of the Drainage Project.

- *More lighting was needed in the car parks and existing surfaces were messy.*
Both these issues would be resolved in Phase 3 of the Project.
- *Would the new drainage system from Dawson Field involve sending water under The Common?*

Yes. A professional consultant had drawn up the specification for the project. Water from the new drains would flow into a balancing pond and then under the road at The Common. Drainage pipes and oil interceptors would be installed under the car parks before they were resurfaced.

- *Improved access was needed to the Bowling Club for disabled bowlers:*
Access to the Bowling and Tennis Clubs and the Parish Office would be improved in Phase 3 of the Project when the path from Mayes Lane car park would be widened to take wheelchairs. The Council would look again at its policy for allowing access by cars.
- *An additional youth shelter was suggested at the top of Dawson Field near the Main Road:*
The position of the existing shelter had been decided in consultation with Essex Police. There were no plans for an additional shelter.
- *Staff at Danbury Sports and Social Centre were praised for their helpful attitude:*
This was noted and the Council would pass on the compliment.
- *A resident living on Bicknacre Road commended the helpful attitude of ECC Highways' staff during recent resurfacing works:*
This comment would be passed on to ECC.
- *The area outside Public Toilets looked untidy and needed to be landscaped:*
This was already due to be addressed by ECC Highways.
- *A bus shelter was needed on the north side of Maldon Road:*

This was an ongoing issue with ECC Highways and there were problems about where to place the shelter as a result of objections by residents. The matter would be pursued.

- *A request to speed up the decision-making process for the proposed quarry at Tyndales Farm in view of the stress caused to residents by the lengthy process:*
The Council understood the issue and would do what it could.
- *The timing of the pedestrian crossing outside the Co-op should be altered to give more priority to pedestrians:*
The Council agreed and ECC Highways would be asked to look into adjusting the timings.
- *Request for action on Wickham House (the Old Tea Rooms), a derelict property at Runsell Green:*
The Council had been in recent contact with officers at CBC who had confirmed that there was no further action they could take.

7 Conclusion

At the conclusion of questions and discussion, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and for their support of the Council over the year. He drew the meeting to a close at 9.10pm.

Signed: (Chairman)

Date: